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Sequence and Simultaneity in Wace and Chrétien de Troyes

Abstract

This essay considers the forms and temporal structures of twelfth-century romance and historiography, focusing on Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* and *Lancelot*. It argues, drawing upon theoretical perspectives from Reinhart Koselleck and François Hartog, that Wace's poem can be understood in terms of a twelfth-century "regime of historicity" (Hartog) that seeks to produce an ordered, "synchronous" (Koselleck) historical time. Chrétien, taken here as writing against Wace in a close, dialectical repudiation of his predecessor's narrative forms, adopts a temporal structure that is incommensurable with Wace's, and in doing so expands the space of possibility for the narrative representation of the past.[1]

2. See also Kelly, *Art of Romance* 144–45, Uitti; *"Le Chevalier au Lion"* 230; Frappier 185–86; examples could be multiplied. Peter Haidu warns, in a useful review of some early positions, that readings of this kind tend to understate the "central fact of disjunctiveness" (656) in episodic form.

In the course of his foundational reading of Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, Erich Auerbach describes the narrative structure of chivalric romance as one "in which fantastic encounters and perils present themselves to the knight as if from the end of an assembly-line" (135). These events (*aventures*) "crop up without any rational connection, one after another, in a long series," and are united, Auerbach claims, not in content but in purpose: to test and demonstrate "the very essence of the knight's ideal of manhood" (135). Auerbach is not alone in suggesting that romance is marked by an apparently contingent seriality. A similar idea is legible in Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope of "unexpectedness," for him the distinctive spatio-temporal feature of chivalric romance: in such texts, narrative time is fragmentary, "organized abstractly and technically" (151), its elements connected only through the "category of miraculous and unexpected chance" (152). And a common extension of this perspective, as given for example by Norris J. Lacy, would argue that romance narrates an apparently contingent, fragmentary series of events which take on a meaningful unity only retrospectively, through the clerical poet's conjunctive art (115).[2] These accounts of romance's narrative structure remain persuasive and valuable. But in this essay I will make something like the oppo-

3. Uitti's word (*Chrétien de Troyes Revisited* 59–66); see also Uitti, "*Le Chevalier au Lion*" 186–87.

4. For some of the extensive work on the relationships between these two categories (defined in various ways), see for instance Ashe, *Fiction and History*; Field; Fleischman; Green; Stein; and Whitman.

5. Orlemanski (148–52) distinguishes two major approaches to theorizing fiction: the 'universalist,' which treats fiction non-historically as (for example) a philosophical concept or a property of language; and the 'modernist,' which understands fiction as emerging at a specific point in historical time.

6. The question of political affiliation is debated, especially in the case of Geoffrey of Monmouth. I follow Ingledew in considering Geoffrey's text as part of a "Norman and Anglo-Norman territorial and genealogical enterprise" (669), "deeply embedded in the long-term Norman project" (688). For a summary of the basic positions, see Gillingham.

site claim: that the distinctive formal quality of romance lies not in its contingent seriality, but rather in its latent potential for simultaneity; a potential which, in the case of Chrétien's *Yvain*, becomes actual through this poem's intertextual connection with its chronologically-interlaced "twin" narrative, *Lancelot*.[3] Further, and more polemically, I argue that this potential for simultaneity is precisely what distinguishes twelfth-century romance on a formal level from the kinds of medieval writing – closely and intricately related to it – that we recognize as history.[4] My framing is prompted here by Julie Orlemanski's recent and persuasive theorization of fictionality as a "demarcational phenomenon" (147), generated from the dynamic, historically situated interactions of referential convention, rather than as a transhistorical category, or a phenomenon that emerges at some historically situated point of origin.[5] Romance's capacity for simultaneity, in contrast with the linear forms of twelfth-century dynastic historiography, is an important part of what prompts us to describe it as fiction. And so I will suggest below that in these mutually constitutive acts of demarcation, twelfth-century fiction emerges conceptually as something quite unexpected: not a relation to truth, but a relation to time.

These claims depend in turn upon a particular account of the formal characteristics of twelfth-century insular historiography. Accordingly, in the first part of this essay I describe the forms and mimetic protocols of several related works of history-writing, focusing in particular on Wace's *Roman de Brut* (*c.* 1155), which inhabits and develops the historiographical forms of its Latin predecessors, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum* (*c.* 1125) and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* (mid-1130s). I argue that the form of Wace's poem is marked above all by an insistent, singular linearity, one distinct from that described by Auerbach and Bakhtin as operating in romance.

In examining these widely-circulated texts, which were produced close to and in some degree of complicity with the centers of twelfth-century insular political power,[6] I attempt to mark out what François Hartog would describe as a "regime of historicity:" an established cultural order that shapes the experience of time in a particular historical moment (15–17). A related set of theoretical tools, just as important to the work of this essay, are provided by Reinhart Koselleck, and most of all his concept of *Gleichzeitigkeit* (synchronicity). Koselleck's theory of the "synchronicity of the non-synchronous" (*die Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*) describes a process by which a set of multi-layered, heterogeneous temporalities – always present at

any given moment – are brought into synchronicity by and in histor- ical discourse.[7] In Helge Jordheim's generative reading of Koselleck, this synchronicity is "never a given, but always a product of […] a complex set of linguistic, conceptual and technological practices of synchronization" (505), key dynamics in the operation of cultural power in any given historical period.[8]

So, I understand the linear time-regime of the twelfth-century historiographical texts discussed here as part of this work of synchro- nization: an ideologically charged ordering of time which attempts to delimit temporal experience, naturalizing linearity and along with it those political structures – namely, agnatic descent and royal-im- perial governance – which are most legible within it. I describe this temporal order below as a kind of historical infrastructure: a set of mostly-invisible edifices that shape an experience of the historically represented world, simplifying certain kinds of movement and per- ception while constraining others.

If the historiographical texts considered here are understood as part of a linear time-regime, then the 'twin' romances of Chrétien de Troyes (both *ante* 1181), discussed in the second part of this essay, can be thought of as inhabiting a set of temporalities incompatible with this historical linearity, and as such marking what Hartog would de- scribe as a "crisis of time," in which an established articulation of tem- poral categories "no longer seems self-evident" (16). Read in this way, *Lancelot* and *Yvain* participate actively in the discourse of history; they are texts deeply engaged with questions of historical representa- tion, rather than disinterested narrative experiments.[9] The historio- graphical interests of *Yvain* in particular have been noted before (Stein 125–50, Patterson 207–09), but previous discussions have not consid- ered the role of form. By contrast, I claim that Chrétien's formal choic- es mark his poems as something distinct from, and incommensurable with, the linear structures of twelfth-century Arthurian historiography. In this argument, romance's act of formal demarcation works not only to produce a fictive temporal space, isolated from historical time, but also to complicate and destabilize a set of naturalized associations be- tween historiographical narrative forms and the past as such.

I. Synchronicity

Twelfth-century England was a time and place of resurgent, ambi- tious historiographical activity (Southern 246–56; Otter 22–23; Pat-

10. See *Gesta* v. 445. 5 (1: 797), where William describes himself as the first person since Bede to have "set in order the unbroken course of English history" ("continuam Anglorum historiam ordinauerim"), and Otter 108 for discussion.

11. On the *series* (or *cursus*) *temporum*, a common term of art in medieval historiography, see Otter 80–110; Kempshall 113–14; Spiegel, "Structures of Time" 25–26; Chenu 167–71; and Auerbach 75.

12. Stein suggests (161) that Geoffrey's prologue is a deliberate echo of William's; in Patterson's view, Geoffrey's adoption of the linear forms found in William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon constitutes a "mockingly brilliant response" which places these forms "in the service of an elaborate and excessive counterfeit" (206).

13. On the circulation and influence of the histories of William and Geoffrey (as well as Henry of Huntingdon), see Tahkokallio. On the popularity and authority of Geoffrey's *Historia*, especially as a source for vernacular writing, see Ingledew 700–03.

14. This does not exclude the possibility of digression: see Otter 103 for the point that William's departures from the *series temporum* are explicitly marked, with the effect of preserving the structural importance of the regnal sequence.

15. Turner gives a useful summary: "secular and vernacular historiography emerges in Western Europe at the same time as the social system of genealogy" (85), and "genealogy has a profound impact on the developing historiographical tradition" (86).

16. See also, conversely, Henry of Huntingdon's praise for Geoffrey's *Historia* on the grounds that it fills a gap which Henry was unable to find narrated elsewhere. See *Historia Anglorum* VIII. 3. 1 (558), and Dalton 706 for discussion.

terson 157–58; Chenu 162–201). An early key text is William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum*, a continuous narrative of English royal history up to William's own time. William presents his text as having an authority and weight comparable to Bede's foundational *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.[10] His prologue laments the incompleteness of insular historiography in the centuries after Bede, and so proposes to "repair the series of time" ("temporum seriem sarcire," I. Prol. 2 [1:2]).[11] Although Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae / De gestis Britonum*, written in the decade after William's *Gesta*, is usually described as pseudo-historical on account of its apparently invented source, his prologue nevertheless offers a justification identical to that found in William's text: there is a gap in the historical record, located in this case before the period treated by Bede, which Geoffrey proposes to repair with his continuous ("continue"), chronologically ordered ("ex ordine") narrative of the deeds of the kings of Britain (i. Prol. 2 [5]).[12]

The forms adopted by these twelfth-century insular historiographers are then, in some important respects, distinctive and consistent.[13] William of Malmesbury and Geoffrey of Monmouth both fashion their histories in accordance with the same formal principle: that events must be arranged in a single unbroken chronological series, in order that no gaps remain and all time is covered.[14] These linear forms, plausibly connected by Gabrielle Spiegel, R. Howard Bloch and others to ongoing shifts in aristocratic family structure, emphasize ideas of genealogy, descent, inheritance, and dynastic continuity in service of a set of related ideological purposes: "to exalt a line and legitimize its power" (Spiegel, "Genealogy" 47), to assert "ownership of time" (Ingledew 669), and to effect a secular-typological transfer of prestige from past to present (Patterson 160).[15] Later in the century, the historiographer William of Newburgh bases his scathing critique of Geoffrey's *Historia* on an accusation of "overstuffing the gap" (Otter 97), suggesting that he too understood the historian's task along similar formal lines (*Historia rerum Anglicarum* i. Prol 3–6 [28–31]). This critique of Geoffrey is not primarily addressed to the truth-value of his text, but rather to its spatiotemporal placement, which intrudes upon established chronology. The mere existence of false narrative truth-claims is not as troubling as the placement of such truth-claims in historical sequence.[16] The *series temporum* is thus necessarily singular: "only one body can occupy any given space at any given time" (Otter 97).

Another type of related singularity is at work in these texts: the

unity of the realm. William of Malmesbury's work, as Rees Davies has argued, turns on a process of unification, with England developing into a territory inhabited by a single people, who then come to be ruled by a single monarch (14–15). Likewise, Geoffrey's *Historia* begins by narrating a territory in constant danger of fragmentation which is gradually stabilized through the successive efforts of its rulers, culminating, as Robert Stein shows, in a celebration of Arthur's power that closely engages the concept of unitary imperial sovereignty (108–09). Relatedly, it has been argued many times that the *Historia* was written "to promote unity and peace during a time of civil war," as Paul Dalton notes in a useful review of previous work (690).

These texts, for their wide circulation, authoritative status, and formal consistency, are well described using François Hartog's terminology as part of a twelfth-century regime of historicity. In representing the insular past by means of textual forms structured on the regnal sequence, these works encourage and condition a particular way of seeing the past (along with their twelfth-century present, the notional result of this past). By adopting what Spiegel describes as the "perceptual grid" of genealogical sequence ("Genealogy" 47), they make certain aspects of the past more legible than others, naturalizing a particular, ideologically charged mode of representation. In the regime of historicity within which these texts operate, "certain types of history are possible and others are not" (Hartog 17).

Similar claims can be made for Wace's *Roman de Brut*, the first vernacular translation of Geoffrey's *Historia*, and an important text in the history of twelfth-century history writing, as well as for the much-discussed transition from Arthurian historiography to Arthurian romance (Sargent-Baur; Green 168–87; Burrichter 147). Wace inherits both structure and content from his principal source: both texts make use of the British regnal *series temporum* as a basic formal principle. But there are significant differences, as previous work has shown.[17] In some cases at least, then, Wace's departures can be taken as evidence of his interests and compositional priorities. Geoffrey of Monmouth is generally recognized today as a pseudo-historical writer; in other words, as a writer who presses historical form into the service of fabrication (Green 169; Rollo 38–40). But as Jean Blacker and R. William Leckie have shown, Wace takes Geoffrey's pseudo-historical chronology as material worthy of serious treatment, even attempting to reconcile the competing chronologies he finds in the Vulgate and First Variant versions of the *Historia* (Blacker, "Arthur and Gormund" 261–62; Leckie 102–19). On the other

17. See Le Saux 89–94 for discussion of the poem's sources. A comprehensive recent study of Wace's work of adaptation is given in Paradisi 93–285. The important early work of Houck and Pelan has been rendered partly obsolete, since neither was aware of Wace's use of the First Variant Version of the *Historia* alongside, and often in preference to, the Vulgate (Le Saux 90).

hand, Wace approaches other kinds of narrative material, such as descriptions of battles and speeches, with a much greater willingness to add and adapt (Le Saux 95), suggesting that he observes a strong distinction between the events of the regnal *series temporum*, which must be taken seriously, and the intervening narrative material, which is not historically consequential and can therefore be subject to poetic license, but which nevertheless serves the important function of connecting key events with plausibility and elegance.

This distinction – between the rhetorical categories of *historia* and *argumentum* – is one that most, if not all, historiographers from this period would have recognized and adhered to.[18] More unusual is the degree to which Wace thematizes his poem's ordered structural principle, significantly intensifying his text's reliance on the linearity that he finds in Geoffrey and may also know from other widely-circulated works of twelfth-century Latin historiography. Linear sequence becomes more than a framework here (see Zara): as I argue below, it exerts a strong determinative force on what can be included in Wace's text, and what must be left aside. Wace establishes a homology between textual and political form in his poem, with significant consequences for its horizons of mimetic possibility. In some respects, as Jean Blacker has argued, Wace depoliticizes his text, avoiding the strong assertions of historical exemplarity found in Geoffrey's *Historia* ("Transformations of a Theme" 59–60).[19] But on the other hand, the poem's form instigates a more pervasive ideological work. In what follows, I explore the consequences of Wace's formal choices, both in their successes and at their self-identified limits.

Wace lays out his approach in the poem's opening lines, which perform important aesthetic and form-establishing functions.

> Ki vult oïr e vult saveir
> De rei en rei e d'eir en eir
> Ki cil furent e dunt il vindrent
> Ki Engleterre primes tindrent
> Quels reis i ad en ordre eü,
> E qui anceis e ki puis fu,
> Maistre Wace l'ad translaté
> Ki en conte la verité. (*Roman de Brut* lines 1–8)

> (Whoever wishes to hear and know, from king to king and from heir to heir, who they were and where they came from, those who first held England – which kings there were, in

18. For the common rhetorical division of narrated events into *historia* (things which happened), *argumentum* (things which could plausibly have happened), and *fabula* (things which did not and could not have happened), see Kempshall 315–16, and for the historian's use of invention, Green 150–51.

19. See also Urbanski 35–36 for discussion and additional bibliography.

order, both who came earlier and who came after – master
Wace, who tells the truth about it, has translated it.)[20]

Previous readers of this passage have noted its intense qualities of
lexical repetition, a typical feature of Wace's style (Di Lella 123, Le
Saux 104–05). For Nancy Vine Durling, the "hypotaxis of these lines
[…] suggests the genealogical format of the subsequent narrative; a
conflation of form and content is indicated" (19).[21] In line 2, a styl-
ized procession of monosyllabic words constructed from a very lim-
ited palette of vowel-sounds (and in fact only the five letters *d-e-i-n-r*)
evokes and presents Wace's chosen form: repetitive, successive, and
formally constrained. It would not have escaped Wace, a poet attentive
to the sounds and shapes of words, that *rei* and *eir* are anagrams, a re-
lationship that suggests a distanced, synthetic perspective: as one king
takes another's place ("rei en rei"), the next heir comes into view ("eir
en eir"), already recognizable as the successor, and awaiting only the
operation of narrative time to be transformed, through positional re-
arrangement, not alteration of substance, from *eir* into *rei*.[22]

    Wace here gestures at the historian's privileged position outside
the chronology he describes: all of the kings and heirs are visible
from his vantage point. In other words, the poem depicts an order
which is not only a matter of sequence (the relationship between el-
ements, who comes first and who comes after), but also of structure
(the overall division of time into regnal units, and the structure of
uninterrupted succession).[23] All of this works to suggest an aesthet-
ics of sameness, regularity, and predictability: what Jean Blacker de-
scribes as a "vast, comprehensive network of 'facts'" ("Transforma-
tions of a Theme" 65), and what Wace might in his own words name
as *ordre*. The word *ordre* in line 5 retains much of the conceptual rich-
ness that its cognate word *order* has in present-day English. And al-
though line 6 makes it clear that the primary meaning of *ordre* here
is "sequential arrangement" (who came earlier, and who after), part
of the broader work of Wace's introduction is to emphasize not only
the individual relationships of succession, but also a wider logic of
arrangement, selection and structure.[24]

    The poem stands, I suggest, as a monument to order in several
senses: a celebration of the newly invigorated culture of twelfth-cen-
tury history writing that Wace finds himself able to draw upon, in
which a continuous history of Britain without any gaps appears pos-
sible; relatedly, an assertion of the cultural authority that allows for
a convincing act of *translatio imperii* from the Trojan diaspora to the
Saxons (and from there, by implication, to the Normans); and an ide-

20. All translations are my own unless
otherwise indicated. I have benefited
a great deal from Weiss's translation
of the *Roman de Brut*, and Kibler's
translation of *Yvain*.

21. See also Damian-Grint 193
("history is organized according to
the framework of succession");
Turner 88 ("these lines expose both
the matter and the structure of
Wace's undertaking"); and Stein 122
for similar points.

22. On Wace's "fondness for
wordplay," see Weiss xxiv, and for
discussion of a homophonic pun, see
Orr 277–78.

23. Le Saux (101–02) notes that Wace
maintains a more or less strict
division between these units at the
level of the couplet; unlike Geoffrey,
whose individual reign-narratives
occasionally blur into one another,
Wace invariably ends each structural
unit with a concluding formula, and
begins the new one with a fresh
couplet and a phrase that gestures at
the succession. See also James-Raoul
3 on the substantially lower incidence
of *couplets brisés* (couplets which go
across syntactic breaks) in Wace's
Brut in comparison to Chrétien. Le
Saux also notes (102) that Wace is
stricter than Geoffrey in preserving a
chronological order of events.
Green's discussion of medieval
classifications of narrative order
(*ordo naturalis* and *ordo artificialis*) in
the context of fiction is relevant here
(96–102).

24. On narrative order (*ordo
narrationis*), see Green 96–97 and
Kempshall 299–302. Note also the
use of a lexicon of order in the
prologues of William of Malmesbury,
Gesta I. Prol. 4 [1:14], "ut res
ordinatius procedat" ("so that events
might proceed in a more orderly
way"); and Geoffrey of Monmouth,
Historia i. Prol. 11 [5], "continue et ex
ordine" ("a continuous and well-or-
dered [narrative]").

alization of governance forms that the Angevin court may have seen themselves reflected in. A little-discussed episode from the first third of the poem helps make some of these connections clearer. During the poem's narrative of Cassibellan's reign and the British conflict with Caesar, Wace substantially expands upon a detail mentioned only in passing in the *Historia*.[25] The Romans have been temporarily repelled from Britain, and Caesar retreats to France where he has a tower built:

> Quant Cesar les out apaiez,
> Et tuz les out asuagiez,
> A un mult bon enginneür
> Fist sur la mer faire une tur,
> En Beluine siet, Odre ad nun,
> Ne sai nule de tel façun,
> Faite fu d'estrange compas
> Lee fu desuz el plus bas
> Puis alad tut tens estreinnant
> Si cume l'en l'ala halçant;
> Une pierre tant sulement
> Covri le plus halt mandement
> Maint estage i out e maint estre
> E en chescun mainte fenestre
> Illuec fist ses tresors guarder
> E ses chiers aveirs aüner;
> Il meïsmes dedenz giseit
> Quant de traïsun se cremeit.
> Douz ans en France demura,
> Odre sa tur apareilla,
> Si ad par les citez assist
> E par les terres ses baillis
> Ki as treüz receivre seient
> E ki en Odre les enveient. (*Roman de Brut* lines 4201–24)

(When Caesar had appeased them and fully placated them [*i.e.* the French], he had a tower built beside the sea by a very skilled engineer. It is in Boulogne, it has the name Odre; I do not know another one like it. It was made in an unusual shape: broad below, in the lower part, and then it became continually narrower as it went up. A single stone covered the uppermost room. It had many storeys and many halls, and in

25. See *Historia* IV. 60. 124–28 (74–75, translation Wright's): "Caesar igitur, cum sese deuictum inspexisset, cum paucis ad naues diffugit et tutamen maris ex uoto nactus est. Tempestiuis etiam uentis instantibus, erexit uela sua et Morianorum litus petiuit. Ingressus est deinde quandam turrim quam in loco qui Odnea uocatur construxerat antequam Britanniam hac uice adiuisset" ("Caesar saw that he was beaten, fled with a few companions to his ships and reached the safety of open water as he had hoped. The winds were favourable, so he set sail for the coast of Flanders. He landed at a tower which he had built in a place called Odnea, before embarking on his present invasion"). The First Variant Version gives a similar level of detail (*First Variant Version* §61 [53]): "Ibi prope litus turrim ingressus, quam antea sibi preparaverat propter dubios belli eventus, tuto se collocavit loco. Turri illi Odnea nomen erat, ubi exercitum misere dilaceratum longa admodum quiete refecit et proceres terre ad se collocutum venire fecit" ("There, near the shore, he [Caesar] entered a tower, which he had previously prepared for himself on account of the uncertainties of war. The tower was called Odnea, where he reinforced his much-depleted army very quietly and gradually, and caused the lords of that land to come and confer with him").

each one there were many windows. There Caesar had his treasure guarded and his valuables gathered. He himself stayed inside when he feared treason. He stayed two years in France, equipped his tower Odre, and also installed his officials in the towns and throughout the countryside, who would receive payments of tribute and send them to Odre.)

This tower is a symbol of Caesar's effective imperial authority, as well as the center of a vast bureaucratic and infrastructural network that allows for the extraction of tributary wealth from the towns and countryside, and for the transportation of this wealth to what I will for the moment continue to describe as "Odre," the temporary center of Caesar's imperial power. The narrowing form of the tower suggests a crude visualization of hierarchical order, with the single stone standing atop all the rest.[26] Although Wace has not invented this tower (either in its name or its shape),[27] the scene of bureaucratic wealth extraction he narrates appears to be original to him, and ties the tower's various features together into a scene which quite neatly represents and idealizes a particular order of governance.[28] The scene suggests structure, organization, and dominion: in other words, order. And its name is, of course, very close to the actual word *ordre*.[29] In fact, at least some manuscripts of Wace's poem use the spelling *ordre* (a fact obscured in Arnold's edition, which silently regularizes large numbers of variant spellings).[30] Readers of at least some of the surviving manuscripts would, then, have understood this tower as being literally named "the Tower of Order." The tower's image of imperial governance – a singular emanation of power that produces spatial homogeneity, regularity, and predictability – marks, I suggest, the apex of Wace's ordered historical vision, in which charismatic lordship and bureaucratic structure are united into a single system as Caesar's personal commands (*fist faire, fist guarder, fist aüner, assist*) produce a wide-ranging administrative governance.[31] The spatial *ordre* produced by Caesar, and encapsulated in the tower at O(r)dre, is another dimension of Wace's formal principle, closely related to the temporal *ordre* of structure and sequence.[32]

The tower at O(r)dre suggests Wace's vision of well-ordered space, and elsewhere in the poem we find regular indications of Wace's interest in the connection between effective royal governance and infrastructural or bureaucratic networks. Earlier in the text, Belin's accession to unchallenged rule over Britain coincides with a concentrated project of infrastructural development, linked in turn to the establishment of a lawful peace. Belin surveys his land, and no-

26. This detail is not included in most of the surviving manuscripts: see *Roman de Brut* 106n5.

27. For discussion of the historical Tour d'Ordre (now destroyed), see Houck 215–17. Egger combines earlier descriptions of the tower to suggest that its form was "une sorte de pyramide octogone à douze étages, dont chacun était en retrait d'un pied et demi sur l'étage inférieur" (417, "a kind of octagonal pyramid with twelve storeys, each of which was set back by one and a half feet from the lower one"). Wace's account is recognizable as an exaggeration of this description of the historical tower's narrowing form.

28. We might note the ways in which this scene reflects twelfth-century developments in English bureaucratic governance: see Clanchy 64–70; and Hollister and Baldwin.

29. Although not a variant of it, at least according to the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* and Godefroy's *Dictionnaire*, neither of which record *odre* as an attested spelling of *ordre*.

30. On Arnold's editorial practice, see Weiss xxv–xxvii. I have not consulted all surviving manuscripts of this poem, but I know of at least two in which the spelling *ordre* is used (see lines 4205, 4220, 4224, 4305 and 4550): Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF), fr. 1450, f. 124r, 124v, 125r; and Paris, BNF, fr. 794, f. 302r, 303r.

31. See also Le Saux 114: "Wace subtly promotes Caesar as a civilizational figure." On Geoffrey's "astonishing" attribution of a "persistently imperial history" to Britain see Ingledew 677; Wace can be plausibly read as reproducing this aspect of his source.

32. This passage also offers a useful example of Wace's interest in maintaining a chronological *ordo naturalis* in his narrative, noted for example by Le Saux 101 and Green 176. As Houck notes, Geoffrey's brief mention of the tower is retrospective, but in a "characteristic anticipation of a later event," Wace "tells of the construction of this tower at the time in the story when Geoffrey says it occurred" (216).

33. The *First Variant Version* (§44 [39]) does not describe Belin as a builder of roads, and does not connect his other building projects (including the city of Kaerusch and London's Billingsgate, both also mentioned by Wace) to his restoration of British law: "Leges quoque paternas in regno renouauit et firmas teneri precepit constanti iusticie indulgens" ("He also renewed the old laws in the kingdom and ordered them to be kept firmly, inclining firmly towards justice"). The *Historia*'s more detailed account describes the building of roads including the Fosse Way, but unlike in Wace, the roads are built to resolve disputes concerning the extent of the king's law (*Historia* III. 39 [51–52], translation Wright's): "Maxime autem indixit ut ciuitates et uiae quae ad ciuitates ducebant eandem pacem quam Dunuallo statuerat haberent; sed de uiis orta fuerat discordia, quia nesciebatur quibus terminis definitae essent. [...] Deinde sanciuit eas omni honore omnique dignitate iurisque sui esse praecepit quod de illata super eas uiolentia uindicta sumeretur" ("Above all, he [Belin] proclaimed that the cities and the roads leading to them should continue to enjoy the peace established by Dunuallo; but disputes had arisen about the roads because nobody knew their prescribed boundaries. [... Having thus built roads,] he inaugurated them with all honor and dignity, proclaiming that it would be his own responsibility to take retribution for any act of violence committed upon them").

34. See *Roman de Brut* lines 84–88: "Creüsa out esté sa mere / Ki fille fu Priant le rei, / Mais al tomulte e al desrei / Kant Eneas de Troie eissi, / En la grant presse la perdi" ("Creusa, who was the daughter of King Priam, had been his [Ascanius's] mother, but during the tumult and disorder in which Aeneas escaped, he lost her in the huge crowd"). By my count, there are thirty-three examples of *rei* or *reis* being used as rhyme-words in Wace's poem; the two sole instances of the *rei / desrei* rhyme (lines 85–86, 289–90) are also the first two examples of *rei* being used as a rhyme-word. On Wace's interest in "anarchy versus social order" see Sturm-Maddox 41.

35. For example, *Roman de Brut* lines 2305–06: "Cist mist les lagues e les leis / Que encor tienent li Engleis." ("He [Dumwallo] set down the laws and customs which the English still keep").

tices that "l'on ne poeit prod passer / Ne de cited a l'altre aler" (lines 2607–08, "one could not in any way travel or go from one city to another"). He therefore has roads and bridges built, most notably the Fosse Way, which is described as running from Totnes in Cornwall to Caithness in Scotland (lines 2617–20). Belin then commands that peace should be kept on these roads, which now traverse the entire realm (lines 2629–34).[33] This motif of the peace of the roads is common in medieval romance and historiography, and functions, as Robert Rouse has shown, as an assertion of strong and effective kingship (126). We might consider here what the establishment of an infrastructural network of roads and laws suggests about ruled space. The physical infrastructure of roads, constructed as part of Belin's effort to establish peace, has the effect of producing consistent, homogeneous conditions across the realm. These conditions produce, in turn, something like the baseline possibility of national law, and indeed something like (proto-)national identity, with the same laws and customs prevailing everywhere. Further, Wace shows these structures as emerging directly from strong royal governance. To put it in terms of an ironic rhyme used twice in the early parts of Wace's poem in its narration of the chaos of the Trojan diaspora, the king, *rei*, stands against *desrei*, disorder; disorder, in turn, is understood as the state of *des-rei* – punningly, the absence of a king.[34]

It is important that what I am describing as Wace's 'historical infrastructure' produces homogeneity across not only space, but also time. He emphasizes at various points the present endurance of laws established in the distant past, connecting the British past to his English/Angevin present.[35] This refusal of historical distance can also be observed in Wace's regular practice of naming Britain proleptically as England (Leckie 110), and his much-noted interest in the etymologies and origins of place-names (Warren 153–58). All of these choices work to produce a synchronized (*gleichzeitige*) historical temporality, reducing the long span of the insular past to a flat space of self-similarity. I use the word "infrastructure" deliberately here, in the sense developed by Paul N. Edwards: an "artificial environment" which nonetheless "simultaneously constitute[s] our experience of the natural environment" (189). Wace's historical infrastructure becomes a kind of "naturalized background" (Edwards 185), receding into near-invisibility. But the effect of these choices is considerable: the spatial unity and historical continuity of the British islands becomes an unquestioned background to the specific narratives of rise and fall which shape the poem's temporal motion. Wace naturalizes

unitary kingship and British/English regnal space through his poem's consistently ordered form.

I describe all this, reversing Mikhail Bahktin's description of romance (151–52), as a narrative chronotope of expectedness. Wace's historical infrastructure, extending across space and time as well as through the poetic fabric of his work, guarantees the predictable endurance of the conditions and parameters described above. We might consider the specific ideological and political resonances of Wace's work, as others have before (Schmolke-Hasselmann; Zatta; Urbanski; Blacker, "Transformations of a Theme"), but what interests me more here is Wace's intense formalism, which in many ways overshadows the poem's imputed political affiliations.[36] Whatever Wace's reasons for writing this poem in this particular way, his ordered historical infrastructure, with its insistent focus on the singular chronology of regnal sequence, suggests that Wace prioritizes form over content, and indeed that he may think of historical truth as being something like a formal property, with his ordered work revealing the hidden structures of the chaotic past.

Such a procedure necessarily relies on the capacity of the raw narrative material to be satisfactorily ordered. Accordingly, at this point, I turn to a section of the *Roman de Brut* which poses a considerable challenge to Wace's chosen form: the famous twelve years of peace that follow Arthur's decisive conquest of all Britain, and precede his final campaign of hubristic imperial conquest, his betrayal, and uncertain death. I will argue that Wace's much-discussed refusal to narrate the fabulous events of the twelve-year *pax Arthuriana* proceeds from an anxiety that is precisely formal.[37] Wace recognizes that his chosen form is incommensurable with the narrative material that he encounters here, and so avoids recounting them in detail, despite their notable content that would make them potentially worthy of inclusion in historical narrative:

> Que pur amur de sa largesce,
> Que pur poür de sa prüesce,
> En cele grant pais ke jo di,
> Ne sai si vus l'avez oï,
> Furent les merveilles pruvees
> E les aventures truvees
> Ki d'Artur sunt tant recuntees
> Ke a fable sunt aturnees:
> Ne tut mençunge, ne tut veir,

36. The poem's lack of specificity (in, for instance, describing its purpose or giving a dedication) could very well have been part of Wace's patronage strategy, since he may have written the poem in the hope of securing some future benefit (Le Saux 7–9; Damian-Grint 54–55, 132–33).

37. This passage appears to be original to Wace: compare *Historia* IX. 153 (204–05) and *First Variant Version* §153 (145).

Ne tut folie ne tut saveir.
Tant unt li cunteür cunté
E li fableur tant flablé
Pur lur cuntes enbeleter,
Que tut unt fait fable sembler. (*Roman de Brut* lines 9785–98)

(Whether from love of his generosity, or from fear of his
prowess, in this great peace which I speak of – I don't know if
you've heard of it – marvels were revealed and adventures
discovered, those which are so often recounted about Arthur
that they have turned into fables: not entirely lies, not
entirely true, neither total folly nor total wisdom. The tellers
have told so many tales, and the fabulators so many fables, in
order to embellish their tales, that they have made it all seem
like a fable.)

The proliferation of multiple accounts of Arthur's exploits during
this period of peace, emblematized by the passage's insistent repeti-
tion of *tant* to emphasize ideas of extent, variation and totality ("so
often," "not entirely," "so many," "it all"), poses a challenge to Wace's
historiographical procedure. Although the phenomena of narrative
embellishment and creative retelling suggest potential difficulties of
selecting an authoritative version of events, it is equally significant
that these are narratives which formally resist the ordered, sequen-
tial arrangement which has been Wace's consistent practice else-
where in the poem. In a sense, the events of the twelve-year peace all
take place at the same time, since they cannot be arranged sequen-
tially. They are not concerned with marking the movements of his-
torical time, taking place as they do in a period of extended peace,
during which the conflicts and genealogical motion of regnal histo-
ry temporarily ebb away. They cannot be meaningfully placed in or-
dered sequence; in this important sense, they are simultaneous, and
so cannot be, at least for Wace, synchronous (*gleichzeitig*). Wace has
promised to narrate a linear historical *ordre*, but the situation that he
encounters in the *pax Arthuriana* is order's opposite, characterized
not by a traceable linearity, with one sequence of events privileged
above all others, but by a tangled simultaneity from which no single
narrative series can be unpicked. And as Ad Putter and Rosemary
Morris have shown, this period of peace is precisely the period in
which early Arthurian romance places itself. One well-explored ap-
proach, then, would be to say that romance inaugurates a space of fic-
tion which operates differently from history because it is located out-

side history, or within it (Auerbach 133; Putter 4). The following section will make a different claim: that the knotted textuality of the *pax Arthuriana* offers romance – here understood as part of historical time, not as a retreat from it – the opportunity to reconsider what history itself can be.

II. Simultaneity

If twelfth-century romance can be described as a part of twelfth-century history, then space is opened up to think of it as a transformative intervention in that history's governing forms and logics: the following section will make this argument with reference to *Yvain* and *Lancelot*, the 'twin' romances of Chrétien de Troyes, arguing for their engagement not only with the language of historiography, but also with the forms and topoi of the historiographical works with which Chrétien was likely familiar. In claiming that the forms of these texts position them as repudiations of twelfth-century dynastic historiography, I depend upon an admittedly speculative claim regarding Chrétien's familiarity with the texts considered above. Several factors work to buttress this speculation: first, that my argument relies in its minimal form only upon Chrétien's general acquaintance with twelfth-century linear dynastic historiography, which seems plausible given Chrétien's acknowledged Latin literacy and the wide circulation of some of the key works (Duggan 27; Tahkokallio, Crick); second, that Chrétien's demonstrable close knowledge of Wace's *Roman de Rou* (Wolf; Green 180; Pickens 220) makes it at least somewhat more likely that he would also have known the earlier and much more widely-circulated *Roman de Brut* (Dean 2–4; Le Saux 85–88), especially given its Arthurian content; and third, the proliferation of arguments for Chrétien's knowledge and use of Wace's *Brut* across his surviving works.[38]

    One of Chrétien's most brilliant rejoinders to the historiographical method of his near-contemporaries lies, I suggest below, in the intertextual relationship of *Yvain* and *Lancelot*, two sequences of memorable deeds which are carefully described as taking place simultaneously. But despite their apparent congruency, *Yvain* and *Lancelot* also "stand in utter – in systematic – contrast to one another," as Karl Uitti has shown ("*Le Chevalier au Lion*" 186). So, I will argue that Chrétien's poems expand historical temporality through the structural conceit of chronological simultaneity alongside a set of funda-

38. Pelan 62; Pickens 220–21; Sturm-Maddox 32; Köhler 11; Putter; Morris; but for disagreement see Duggan 31–32 and 201.

mental divergences that show – in what we might read as a strong implicit rejection of history at the regnal scale – that even an apparently peaceful realm, brought into the same 'now' by Arthur's royal-imperial governance, nevertheless contains a vast diversity of experience, custom, and situation.[39] In other words, these poems put the lie to any history which would attempt to present the realm, or the reign, as the only possible historically meaningful frameworks. In these poems, Chrétien emerges as a strongly 'anti-infrastructural' poet, concerned with narrating at scales and in simultaneous relations that are more or less illegible within Wace's understanding of the past, and which, in their tangled, disordered simultaneity, refuse the synchronicity of *Gleichzeitigkeit*. Chrétien's refusal of the temporal infrastructure available to him in existing Arthurian historiography has the effect of denaturalizing the regnal scale: Wace's "chronotope of expectedness" is replaced in Chrétien by a "chronotope of unexpectedness" (Bakhtin 151), creating new possibilities for the narrative representation of the past. In what follows, I develop this claim with reference first to time, and then to space.

The importance of time to Chrétien's *Yvain*, in particular, has been widely acknowledged (Uitti, "*Le Chevalier au Lion*" 185–86; Rikhardsdottir 145).[40] The poem begins with a gesture of temporal suspension, with the knight Calogrenant recounting an adventure which Yvain then repeats, step for step: "In the seven years between Calogrenant's adventure at the spring and the time of his narration, nothing seems to have happened […] the seven years have passed without leaving a trace, just as time usually does in a fairy tale" (Auerbach 130). This suspension, understood by Auerbach as a signal of romance's broader retreat from a directly politicized depiction of social reality (133), can also be described as a repudiation of historical time. After all, history narrates change, and nothing has changed in the seven years that pass between Calogrenant's journey and Yvain's repetition of it. And yet, as Dennis Green has noted, Calogrenant's promise to speak "ne […] de songe / Ne de fable, ne de menchonge" (lines 171–72, "neither of a dream, fable or lie") when telling his story marks a specific appropriation of the "terms with which historians conventionally established their reliability" (180; also Patterson 208). Calogrenant is speaking, we might say, as a historian here; specifically, as the kind of reliable eyewitness whose testimony is privileged in the writings of twelfth-century historiographers such as William of Malmesbury.[41] But there is a strong irony in this performance of historiographical precision: Calogrenant's honest and accurate

39. On the regulative force of a singular 'now,' see Bloch (who also uses the term *die Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*) on the synchronizing work of capitalist temporality.

40. For *Lancelot*'s use of chronology (at various points both vague and precise) see Bruckner, *Shaping Romance* 151.

41. See for instance Kempshall 187, on William's weighing of eyewitness testimony using the tools of judicial rhetoric; and *Gesta* II. 204. 1 (I: 377).

testimony, confirmed in all its details by Yvain's subsequent journey, is essentially irrelevant to history (lines 768–801). History narrates past events which would otherwise be lost, but the events recounted by Calogrenant remain continually available to *Yvain*'s present: Calogrenant tells his audience nothing that would otherwise be unknowable. History should also narrate events that are "worthy of memory" (Kempshall 123, 137, quoting Isidore and Cicero respectively), a standard which Calogrenant's journey, recounted "non de s'annor, mes de sa honte" (line 60, "not to his glory, but to his shame"), surely fails to meet. The passage thus exhibits a thoroughly misdirected precision, one which is further indicated by Calogrenant's self-pitying conclusion to his story, a close verbal echo of the *Roman de Rou*'s account of Wace's journey to the forest of Brocéliande in fruitless search of the magic spring described in Arthurian *fables*.[42] Wace's failure to act as eyewitness to the legendary marvels of Brocéliande, his failure to make fable into history, is juxtaposed with Calogrenant's failure to create his own knightly history.

Calogrenant's story, which provides the first major section of the poem with its narrative impetus, can thus be read as a close engagement with the language and expectations of historiography, presenting a sequence of events which pointedly fail to become historically pertinent.[43] Yvain's repetition of Calogrenant's journey, on the other hand, at least opens the possibility of being constituted historically: Yvain kills the knight who defends the spring, proceeds to marry his widow Laudine, and becomes the new lord of Landuc, thus producing a dynastic change with potentially historical force, especially given Yvain's identity in Arthurian tradition as the son of Urien, king of Moray (*Roman de Brut* lines 10251–52; *Yvain* line 1822).[44] But Yvain's marriage proves unstable: his failure to return as promised to Laudine after a year of tourneying causes her to reject him, an act which in turn propels the poem's story onward towards a resolution which, when it finally arrives, makes no gesture towards generational change, describing instead the "pez sanz fin" (line 6817, "endless peace") that prevailed between Yvain and Laudine from that point onwards. *Yvain* thus resists the pull of a linear form "in which the most significant structural divisions of history are supplied by generational change" (Spiegel, "Genealogy" 50); instead, it structures itself according to the particular set of problems developed by and in the text. Chrétien is surely aware of the strong conclusive force of aristocratic marriage in narrative, but uses it here instead to inaugurate a beginning: as Robert Stein has argued, the first third of *Yvain*

42. *Yvain*, lines 575–76: "Ainsi alai, ainsi reving, / Au revenir pour fol me ting" ("Thus I went there, thus I came back; On the way back I took myself for a fool"); and Wace, *Roman de Rou*, lines 6394, 6397–98: "La alai jo merveilles querre / […] fol i alai, fol m'en revinc, / folie quis, por fol me tinc" ("I went there in search of marvels […] I went there as a fool, I came back as a fool; I searched for folly, I took myself for a fool"). For discussion, see Wolf.

43. Patterson suggests that, by "calling into question the historiographical mode of verification per se," Chrétien shows it to be "irrelevant to the deeper meanings at which his romance is aiming" (208); it will be apparent that I disagree that Chrétien's rejection of a specific kind of historicity suggests that he regards history *tout court* as irrelevant to these texts.

44. The events of this section of the poem take place between lines 692 and 2165. See also lines 2474–76, where Yvain's marriage is linked directly to the acquisition of land.

functions effectively as an extended prologue, with the poem's core preoccupations emerging from what has been set up in the section that culminates in Yvain's marriage (132–33).

Yvain refuses dynastic temporality in a further centrally important sense, pertinent also to *Lancelot*. If, as Ad Putter and Rosemary Morris have argued, Chrétien understands his romances as being placed within the specific twelve-year peace mentioned by Geoffrey and Wace, then we might notice the presence of a distinct irony. At this point in established Arthurian chronology, Arthur is at the height of his power, having united all of Britain under his rule, and will soon begin a larger process of imperial expansion as he attempts to subjugate all of Europe, to be defeated only by internal treachery. And yet, the romances depict him not as a reigning conqueror, but as a weak *roi fainéant*, outstripped by the vigor of his knights, and even unable to prevent Guenevere's abduction towards the beginning of *Lancelot* (Peters 170–209; Sargent-Baur; Maddox 2–3).[45] The related shift of focus in romance from king to knights has often been read in political terms; for instance, by Robert Hanning as a signal of the new genre's interest in exploring political realities and tensions related to the relationship between established lords and ambitious, itinerant *juvenes*, "armed young men on the make" (54, see also Duby 112–22), or by Donald Maddox as an expression of a tension between royal "anterior order" and a new chivalric elite (14–34). We might equally consider this shift in terms of literary form and temporality. In Chrétien's romances, Arthur is not shown as being in a process of temporal motion or development: he is more or less static, existing outside the ennobling structure of historical time. Dynastic historiography produces, on a basic formal level, an impression of royal power from the simple act of asserting the king's centrality; Arthur's weakness in these poems might suggest, then, the falsity or incompleteness of such accounts – that his reign is not a simple narrative of rise and fall, and the twelve years of peace are not a simple period of unchallenged dominion.

In these respects, Chrétien's romances can be described as retreating not from historical time in general, but from the specific form of linearity in which a privileged sequence of events are selected for inclusion in order to construct a single biographical series. Still, *Yvain* and *Lancelot* are very clearly episodic, and are thus in that specific sense linear. I suggest, then, that Chrétien's structural conceit of chronological simultaneity, described in detail below, substantially qualifies the sequential forms of these romances, prompting a

45. Note in particular Arthur's weary resignation when he is informed that a number of his subjects have been abducted: "Li rois respont qu'il li estuet / sofrir s'amander ne le puet, mes molt l'an poise durement" (*Lancelot*, lines 61–63: "The king replied that he must endure this if he could not resolve it, but that it pained him greatly").

reconsideration of the force of their episodic structure. Three references in *Yvain* to the events of *Lancelot* form the basis of Chrétien's intertext: in lines 3700–17, where Lunete says that she is unable to seek help from Gauvain because he is rescuing Queen Guenevere; in lines 3914–41, where Yvain encounters a lord tormented by the giant Harpin, who is unable to seek help from Gauvain (his brother-in-law), still engaged in rescuing the queen; and in lines 4742–47, where the younger daughter of the lord of Noire Espine arrives at court three days after the queen's return from captivity, with Lancelot still locked in Meleagant's tower. This last reference also connects itself chronologically to Yvain's adventures by noting that the daughter of Noire Espine arrives on the same day that the court receives news of Harpin's defeat by the Knight with the Lion (lines 4748–53). Other, less specific points of contact have been noted in the *Lancelot* (Fourrier 69–88; Frappier, *Etude* 15; Uitti, "*Le Chevalier au Lion*" 183; Bruckner, *Shaping Romance* 91), but the basic structure of the intertext is unidirectional and turns notably on the presence or absence of Gauvain (Frappier, *Chrétien* 148; Brandsma 134–35).

Douglas Kelly has suggested that *Yvain*'s cross-references are "a device borrowed from the historians" (*Art of Romance* 137), and while this is a likely point of origin, Chrétien uses them in a quite different way. In historiography, cross-references are provided in order to more precisely locate the core narrative series in relation to other timelines, providing it with additional substance and authority, as, for instance, when Wace describes the reign of Guendolien as contemporary with the careers of Homer and Samuel: "Dunc esteit Samuel prophetes / E Homer ert preisez poëtes" (*Roman de Brut*, lines 1451–52, "at this time Samuel was a prophet and Homer a famous poet"). External references of this kind, which appeal to established, authoritative, and often geographically distant historical sequences, are distinct from *Yvain*'s references to the events of *Lancelot*, a poem whose setting fades into that of *Yvain*, and which was in all likelihood Chrétien's own invention, composed alongside its twin (Shirt). Moreover, as Roberta Krueger has shown, the relative chronology of these two texts is far from clear: readers must perform their own "interpretative ordering" through a process of comparison (175).

In fact, the presence of an intertextual connection between these two romances, not to mention their many indirect points of similarity and contrast (Uitti, "*Le Chevalier au Lion*" 185–90), works to invite a broader procedure of comparison, well beyond the establishment of a comparative chronology. *Yvain* and *Lancelot* are, in many

respects, positioned as companion pieces; this implicit comparative positioning functions, in part, literally to decenter the romance hero, showing that his story is only one part of a much larger world, and that the priority he enjoys within his own text is merely temporary, or local to the specific work. Further, if *Yvain* and *Lancelot* are understood not as individual texts, but as a connected, composite romance (see Uitti, "*Le Chevalier au Lion*" 189; and Kelly, "Narrative Poetics" 61–62), then we can no longer even firmly identify a singular protagonist or sequence of events. The presence of Gauvain as an important secondary character in both texts, whose activities are not fully recounted in either (Bruckner, *Shaping Romance* 92), further suggests the presence of a set of narrative possibilities beyond what is actually written in the two romances. And at times, as Jill Mann has noted, a character enters a scene to find only the "residue of narrative;" the real action "all seems to be happening somewhere else" (297). Time expands horizontally here, producing something close to the narrative multiplicity gestured at by Wace's emphatic repeated use of the word *tant* in his description of the *pax Arthuriana*: these texts embody a temporality that cannot be expressed in linear historiographical form.

The temporal expansion observed here in the *Yvain-Lancelot* intertext also encourages a corresponding account of Arthurian space. The example of roads, discussed above, provides a useful point of comparison. For Wace, the establishment of an infrastructural network is an important precondition for a unitary space, uniformly subject to the same laws, whose establishment he describes approvingly. In Chrétien's romances, by contrast, roads are a space of unexpectedness: they form a connective network which does not produce homogeneity within the space thus connected, but which rather provides access to *aventure*. I am suggesting, then, that there is a sharp implicit point in Chrétien's choice to imagine roads as producing not predictable, homogeneous peace across the realm, but an effectively infinite variety of strange and violent incident.

As Robert Rouse has shown in his useful study, the 'peace of the roads' motif, found in Wace and discussed above, is part of a broader complex of motifs found in historiography and insular romance which work to assert the strength of a peacemaking king's authority. Closely related is the "hanging royal gold" motif, in which a king displays gold rings at crossroads, or equips remote springs with valuable metal drinking cups, in order to show the reach of his legal authority when they invariably remain in place, undisturbed by thieves. These motifs, involving as they do the "exposure of precious goods"

whose disturbance would break the peace (Rouse 119), have intriguing similarities to *Yvain*'s much-discussed magic spring, which acts as a site of insistent return throughout the poem (Grimbert 69–70). The spring first appears in Calogrenant's story: he recounts meeting a strange and ugly herdsman, who directs him to a spring which will provide the adventure that he seeks:

> d'aventure ne sai je rien,
> n'onques mes n'en oï parler.
> Mes se tu voloies aler
> ci pres jusqu'a une fontainne,
> n'en revandroies sanz painne,
> se tu li randoies son droit. (*Yvain* lines 368–73)

> (I don't know anything about adventure, nor have I ever heard anything said about it. But if you want to go to a spring near here, you will not return from it without a challenge, if you do it justice.)

As Donald Maddox has noted (56), the phrase "randre son droit" is at this stage opaque: we do not yet know what it means to do a spring justice. The herdsman elaborates, describing the path that Calogrenant must follow (line 376) in order to reach the spring, which he describes as being equipped with a hanging "bacins de fer / a une si longue chaainne / qui dure jusq'an la fontainne" ("an iron basin, on a chain long enough to reach the spring"). Using this basin to douse a nearby stone with water gathered from the spring will produce a ferocious storm, which the herdsman says Calogrenant will be lucky to escape (lines 404–07). Calogrenant arrives at the spring, finds what turns out to be a basin of purest gold (lines 419-20), and douses the stone as instructed. The storm happens just as the herdsman described, but an unexpected further consequence ensues, with the arrival of a knight who rebukes Calogrenant for having caused him "honte et let" (line 492, "shame and injury"). The spring-knight's complaint takes on a distinctly legal register, adopting the language of tort, complaint and evidence, as Maddox and Stein have both shown (Maddox 56; Stein 127–28). Calogrenant's interference with the hanging basin has broken the knight's peace and caused damage for which he is now responsible: as the knight says, "desormés / n'avrois de moi trives ne pes" (lines 515–16, "henceforth you will have no truce or peace from me"). But this transgression is also, paradoxically, the true custom of the spring: the space appears to have been designed precisely to produce

a break in the peace, and "doing it justice," following its custom, necessitates breaking the spring-knight's law.

Both objects – *Yvain*'s golden basin and the rings, or cups, of the 'hanging royal gold' motif – are thus closely connected to notions of law, peace, and custom. In both cases, the presence of a valuable object, displayed unguarded in a remote location, challenges those who pass to interfere with it and face the consequences of a broken peace. But the situations differ significantly on the question of what constitutes interference. For hanging royal gold, the prohibition is clear: rings must not be disturbed, and cups may not be removed but can be used in the intended way as amenities; however, it is much less obvious what constitutes misuse of *Yvain*'s golden basin. The basin seems to be provided in order to facilitate the transfer of water from spring to rock – in other words, as an amenity. But using it for its designed purpose produces at least two simultaneous results, both related to the violent storm: *aventure* and legal transgression. Conversely, to misuse the basin according to the terms of the 'hanging gold' prohibition – to remove it from its chain and take it away – could potentially bring a lasting peace to Landuc, a place deeply vulnerable to attack on account of its proximity to the storm-producing magic spring (see lines 6555–61), but would from another perspective constitute theft. What, then, could it mean to 'do the spring justice'? I suggest that the contradictions of this question gesture towards the paradoxes of romance knighthood, indicating that good chivalric *aventure* unavoidably necessitates a breaking of the peace, and further implying, as Stein argues from a different perspective, the scandalous nature of Yvain's killing of the spring's defender (132). I have argued above that Wace places law, spatial connectedness and physical infrastructure in the service of a historiographical method which works hard to produce a synchronized (*gleichzeitig*) chronotope; by contrast, then, the magic spring's complex amenities signal the *ungleichzeitige* nature of Arthurian time and space, since they cannot be ordered or comprehended with reference to a single law.[46]

This conceptual expansion of Arthurian space in *Yvain* is matched by a physically expanded space of possibility. In the encounter discussed above, the herdsman warns Calogrenant to take only the path straight ahead (line 376, "Tote la droite voie va"), for there are many other paths (line 379, "il i a d'autres voies mout"). Calogrenant had begun his journey by taking a road described, strangely, as leading off to the right (line 180, "un chemin a destre"); his path to the magic spring results, then, literally from a detour. Auerbach suggested an

46. Scholarship on Chrétien has thoroughly explored his treatment of the contradictions of vassalage and love-service, an analogous space of incommensurability; see Ashe, *Conquest and Transformation* 260–63; Morgan; and relatedly Bruckner, "Interpreter's Dilemma."

ethical interpretation of this line (128–29), but we might equally point out that Calogrenant's refusal of the straight path resonates with Chrétien's broader exploration of a space of unexpectedness and variability. Roads in *Yvain* lead in all directions, and to unexpected places and situations. Unlike in *Lancelot*, where the distinction between the poem's two settings (Logres and Gorre, ruled by Arthur and Bademagu respectively) is more or less clear, *Yvain*'s locations are much less clearly demarcated. As Auerbach has noted (129), Yvain's journey to the spring begins at court in Carduel (Carlisle, described here as in Wales), and ends three days later near the forest of Brocéliande, notionally located across the sea in Brittany. Auerbach and Knapp both suggest that this geographical inexactitude creates the impression of a fairy-tale setting (Knapp 3–4, 9), but it will be instructive to tease out the paradoxes a little further. The text deliberately furnishes us, via an initial toponym ("Carduel en Gales," line 7) and its description of Yvain's journey as taking place "over mountains and through valleys, through large, deep forests, through strange and savage places [...], many treacherous passes, and many perils and tight spots" (lines 763–67, "par montaignes et par valees / et par forez longues et lees, / par leus estranges et salvages, / [...] mainz felons passages / et maint peril et maint destroit"), with a strong impression that we have not passed beyond the geographical borders of the British Isles.[47] And yet, the recollection of a further toponym ("Broceliande," lines 189, 697) produces an equally strong sense of ambiguity. At this point in Wace's chronology, Arthur is the unchallenged ruler of all Britain; evoking this role, he takes an interest in the marvellous spring and decides to visit it, in the manner of a peacetime king surveying his realm: "[Arthur swore] that he would go to see the spring [...] and take lodging there for the night, and said that all those who wished to go there should come with him" (lines 665, 670–72, "qu'il iroit veoir la fontaine [...] et s'i panra la nuit son giste, / et dit que avoec lui iroient / tuit cil qui aler i voldroient"). And yet the seneschal of Landuc, anticipating Arthur's arrival, imagines that he comes like a conqueror to "lay waste to [their] lands" (line 2088, "noz terres gaster"). Further, when seeking permission from his wife to go off tourneying, Yvain specifically asks to be allowed to "return to Britain" (line 2550, "retorner an la Bretaigne"), implying that Landuc lies outside of its borders. But Britain is, quite unavoidably, an archipelago, and so the text's omission of any description of sea travel continues to trouble any final determination.

Landuc might be understood, then, as occupying an indetermi-

47. The word "destroit" in line 767 should be taken as a lexical amplification of earlier lines – in other words, as meaning "tight spots" – rather than as referring to aquatic straits (see Godefroy s. v. *destroit* n.).

nate position with respect to Arthurian Britain – either within it, beyond its borders, or even both simultaneously. This self-contradictory quality can be taken as having a certain political force. The word 'Britain' is itself ambiguous: it can be used in purely geographical terms to describe a landmass, as in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *descriptio insulae* (*Historia* Desc. 5 [6–7]), or in reference to a space of political dominion – Arthur is still the king of Britain even before he has conquered the entire geographical space describable as Britain. Landuc, then, could be within Britain in a strict geographical sense, but beyond the immediate reach of Arthur's authority, and hence outside Britain in another sense. In this context, we might notice that Yvain's episodic adventures in the poem's second phase nearly all relate in some respect to failures of royal governance: in Stein's words, "the landscape through which [Yvain] travels is riddled with the violence of continual private war" (139). Recovering from his madness, Yvain defends the town of Noroison from the marauding count Alier (lines 3147–317), in a situation reminiscent of the kind of baronial infighting that never troubles Wace's narrative of Arthur's reign – indeed, Wace's famous description of the Round Table may imply the political docility of the British barons under Arthur (*Roman de Brut* lines 9747–54; Schmolke-Hasselmann). Later in *Yvain*, the town assailed by the giant Harpin cannot depend upon the Arthurian court for assistance against aggressors. Yvain, who is at this point travelling incognito as the Knight of the Lion, and is therefore not identifiable as a knight of Arthur's court, comes across the town only by chance while seeking lodging (lines 3772–77). And when he later encounters the town of Pesme Aventure, he finds that it is subject to a completely different authority from Arthur's: the town's two half-demonic lords extract their demanded human tax through an assertion of customary privilege (lines 5260–97). Arthur may ostensibly be the ruler of this space, but there is no evidence that his royal authority has any weight in the places that Yvain encounters on his journeys.

All of this works to suggest an Arthurian space which is not in fact effectively subject to an overarching set of laws or cultural conditions. The chaotic variety of incident – emerging from a situation of apparently widespread political instability – that Yvain encounters on his travels marks a distinct contrast to Wace's narrative in terms of both form and content. But importantly, Chrétien does not even allow this endless variability to attain the force of poetic law. Where in *Yvain* motion through Arthurian space is often characterized by its purposeless divagation – Calogrenant's aforementioned

sharp rightwards turn, Yvain's eventless year of tourneying, glossed over in just ten lines (2674–84), and his descent into madness after Laudine's rejection (lines 2808–32) – in *Lancelot*, emphasis is placed instead on its protagonist's literal single-mindedness and the commensurately singular path that he takes on his initial journey towards Gorre to rescue the imprisoned queen, his love. The poem describes Lancelot's extreme focus on his absent beloved at several points (lines 720–22, 1225–33, 1332–43), and the space through which he moves resonates with this psychological state; for instance, when he comes face-to-face with another knight on a track which is too tight for them to pass or turn their horses (lines 1500–09), or when he must cross the sharp edge of the Sword Bridge, a concrete manifestation of his painful and single-minded journey (lines 3005–117). Even the text's key moment of choice – between entering Gorre via the Underwater Bridge or the Sword Bridge – is made by Gauvain rather than Lancelot (lines 683–88); this decision itself, made between two near-identically "perilous and difficult" crossings, is barely meaningful ("perilleus et grevains," line 691). On a metanarrative level, it is significant that the poem notes in its opening lines that the way forward has been decided in advance by its patron, Marie (lines 1–28). Chrétien, just like Lancelot, has no choice but to move forward with "pain and diligence" in the service of a noble lady (line 28, "sa painne et s'antancïon"). This sense of obligation is later significantly qualified by Chrétien's abandonment of his compositional task, echoed as before in the protagonist's situation: the continuator Godefroi de Leigni informs us that Chrétien stopped working on the poem at the moment when Lancelot is imprisoned, helpless, in Meleageant's tower (lines 7102–10, referring to lines 6132–46). *Lancelot* adopts a linear form, but under duress.

This sense of poetic resistance to the demands of singularity can be seen too in the relationship between the three principal strands of the *Yvain-Lancelot* intertext. *Lancelot*'s externally determined linear structure pulls, despite itself, in the direction of parallel simultaneity when Gauvain departs on his own largely unwritten adventures. Chrétien keeps to his predetermined subject but leaves open the possibility of simultaneous narrative proliferation. *Lancelot*, appropriate to its more constrained form, makes no direct intertextual reference to the events of *Yvain*, but knowledgeable readers might notice veiled references such as those pointed out by Fourrier and Frappier. In a further complication, the unidirectional structure of the *Yvain-Lancelot* intertext is thoroughly ironized by a key metapo-

etic statement in the closing lines of *Yvain*, in which Chrétien describes the poem as a complete work to which only "lies" can be added ("mançonge," line 6824), a statement which rings hollow given the poem's multiple gestures towards the connected stories of Lancelot and Gauvain. The temporal simultaneity and spatial expansiveness of Chrétien's twin romances produce a tangled web in which no single principle of organization – perhaps most of all linearity – can attain precedence. As such, they decisively reject the possibility of a synchronous Arthurian past.

III. Conclusion

Recent extensions of Reinhart Koselleck's theory of historical times have focused on the conflicts and crises implicit in his influential – but elliptical – concept of the synchronicity of the non-synchronous (*die Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*). Helge Jordheim has called for further investigation to be undertaken "in terms of a dialectics between non-synchronicities [...] and the work to adjust, adapt, and control, in other words, to synchronize them" (506); Dan Edelstein, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Natasha Wheatley propose, in a development of Koselleck's thought, a new concept of "chronocenosis," which "offers a sense that multiple temporal regimes are not merely concurrent but at once competitive, conflictual, cooperative, unstable, and sometimes even anarchic […] inhabit[ing] a complex temporal ecosystem with intricate patterns of reliance, adaptation, and violence." (27). And the recent work of François Hartog, also indebted to Koselleck, emphasizes the instability of regimes of historicity, whose characteristics are both "revealed and disturbed" through the interruptive force of temporal crisis (40).

I suggest that this structure of dialectical motion between established regimes of historicity – with their synchronizing, regulative force – and other modes of historical representation is present in the relationship between Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Chrétien's twin romances. I have argued that Wace's anxious description of the *pax Arthuriana* emerges from his sense that his chosen form is, in its rigid linearity, thoroughly incompatible with the tangled simultaneity of Arthurian peace: he perceives, in other words, a crisis of time in the making, in which an ordered linear-dynastic mode of historical representation is no longer comprehensively possible. Chrétien, in turn, embraces the crisis, developing a structure of complex temporal sim-

ultaneity which firmly resists the synchronizing force of linearity. The simultaneous structures of Chrétien's twin romances assert that Wace's attempt to make a well-ordered total account of British regnal history is based on an impossible premise: the chaotic structures of the deep past cannot be resolved into an overarching meaning; there are always more stories worth telling.

It will be apparent by this point that I am thinking of Chrétien here not primarily as a maker of fictions – although this perspective, of course, remains continually available for the study of his poetic art – but as something closer to a historical writer. Three considerations enable this perspective; first, the recurrent medieval description of historical writing as simply *res gestae*, or "things done" (Kempshall 145), suggesting the deeds of romance heroes as being potentially available for inclusion under this capacious heading; and second, the reception of Arthurian narrative matter after the end of the twelfth century. As Christopher Dean has noted (11), the broad outlines of Arthurian history – including the presence of a vigorous knightly retinue at his court – become firmly established in historical writing after 1200; detailed stories of the deeds of these knights could then plausibly have been understood as part of this history. Third and most importantly, the survival of later material contexts which suggest that the narrative poems of Wace and Chrétien were not necessarily regarded by their thirteenth-century transmitters as fundamentally incompatible kinds of writing, despite the stark formal differences argued for above, and despite a widespread critical tendency to think of the former as historiography and the latter as fiction. It has been regularly noted that at least one thirteenth-century manuscript interpolates Chrétien's five surviving romances into Wace's *Roman de Brut* at the precise point when Wace finds himself defeated by the chaotic narrative space of the *pax Arthuriana* (BNF fr. 1450, f. 139v; Putter, Walter, Weaver). In doing this, the compiler of this manuscript has incorporated Chrétien's poems into a long, compendious narrative structure that is best described as cycle rather than sequence — formally heterogeneous, and decidedly non-synchronous. The later tendency in Arthurian literature towards the baggy, compendious forms of the French prose cycles and, later still, Malory's *Morte Darthur* suggests that the compilatory strategy seen in this manuscript is part of a broader development. Time is no longer in crisis in these texts; the emergence of cyclicity implies an understanding of the narrative space of the Arthurian past as something fundamentally non-synchronous, as incorporating a wide variety of

different narratives that operate at different scales and with different objectives. As these compendious forms accumulate, the narrative space of Arthurian literature comes to resemble more and more the tangled, contradictory space gestured at with such anxiety by Wace. We might think of Chrétien's narrative forms, opening up as they do a wider space of simultaneity for the narrative representation of the Arthurian past, as prefiguring this wider shift. Chrétien's romances have been described many times as a birth of fiction; they might, from another perspective, be described as a rebirth of history.

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